Impact of MGNREGA on Socio-Economic Upliftment of the Beneficiaries – A Case Study of Pali District of Rajasthan

A Synopsis

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Introduction:

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, enacted on 25th August 2005, guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act has come into force with effect from February 2, 2006 in 200 districts initially and later on extended to all the rural districts of India from the financial year 2008-09.

NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the Act is augmenting wage employment.
It was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) but was renamed on 2 October 2009 as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

MGNREGA is the most significant act in the history of Indian polity in many ways like grass-root level participation of every citizen and beneficiary through democratic process, multi-layered social audit and transparency mechanism by involvement of civil society, comprehensive planning at village level towards sustainable and equitable development etc. Important salient feature of the Act is to improve the quality of life of rural households who are vulnerable to out-migration in search of daily wage employment by channelizing the wage workforce towards developmental activities at the village level itself.

The scheme was initially in progress in the first phase of 200 districts during its cognitive stage has generated lot of enthusiasm among social scientists, and NGOs and led them to initiate several surveys on their own. The surveys as in the cases of any other scheme are centered around the end results such as targeting all the needy beneficiaries, and implementation of the Act in letter and spirit. The scheme is gigantic in nature and in the process of implementation and achieving the desired output. There are many issues which are straddling the implementing agencies right from District to Gram Panchayat.

The MGNREGA, besides, the main features mentioned in the above background note, also involves participatory planning and implementation of the scheme through

(i) Proactive role of Gram Sabha,
(ii) Rigorous & continuous monitoring by way of social audit, and

(iii) Involvement of ordinary people at the grass-roots level.

It addresses

- Chronic poverty
- Drought
- Deforestation
- Soil erosion etc.

It also aims at

- Generating productive assets,
- Protecting the environment,
- Empowering rural women, and
- Arresting rural-urban migration.

Salient Features of the Process Implementation of MGNREGA

Salient features of the implementation process of the MGNREGA scheme are summarized below:

- Cost sharing: Central government 3/4th, State Government
  1/4th Adult members of rural households summit their name, age and address with photo to the gram panchayats.
- Adult members of a rural household may apply for employment if they are willing to do unskilled manual work.
- Such a household will have to apply for registration to the local Gram Panchayat, in writing or orally.
- The Gram Panchayat after due verification will issue a Job Card to the household as a whole. The Job Card will bear the photograph of all adult members of the household willing to work under NREGA. The Job Card with photograph is free of cost.
- A Job Card holding household may submit a written application for employment to the Gram Panchayat, stating the time and duration for which work is sought. The minimum days of employment have to be fifteen.

- The Gram Panchayat will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days operates.
- Employment will be given within 15 days of application for work by an employment seeker.
- If employment is not provided within 15 days, daily unemployment allowance in cash has to be paid. Liability of payment of unemployment allowance is of the States.
- Work should ordinarily be provided within 5 km radius of the village or else extra allowance of 10% are payable.
- At least one-third of persons to whom work is allotted have to be women.
- Disbursement of wages has to be done on weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight.
- Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs] have a principal role in planning and implementation.
- Each district has to prepare a shelf of projects. The selected works to provide employment are to be selected from the list of permissible works the different categories of permissible works are as follows:

- Water Conservation and water harvesting
- Drought Proofing (including plantation and afforestation)
- Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works
- Flood Control and Protection Works
- Minor irrigation, horticulture and land development on the land of SC/ST/BPL and land reform beneficiaries
- Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks
- Land Development
- Rural Connectivity

Impact on Economic Development

Economic development refers to increases in the standard of living of a nation's population associated with sustained growth from a simple, low-income economy to a modern, high-income economy. Its scope includes the process and policies by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people.

Monitoring & Evaluation under the MGNREGA

- The Ministry has set up a comprehensive monitoring system. For effective monitoring of the projects 100% verification of the works at the Block level, 10% at the District level and 2% at the State level inspections need to be ensured.

- In order to optimize the multiplier effects of NREGA, the Ministry has set up a Task Force to look at the possibility of convergence of programmes like National Horticulture Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, Bharat Nirman, and Watershed Development with NREGA.

- These convergence efforts will add value to NREGA, works and aid in creating durable efforts and also enable planned and coordinated public investments in rural areas.

Review of Literature:

- Annual Report Ministry of Rural Development (April 2006 – March 2007) reported that in case of choice of work under NREGA, highest priority that is 54% was given to water conservation followed by providing irrigation facility to the land owned by SC/ST 10% land development 11%, rural connectivity 21% and any other activity 4% in 2006-2007 etc.

- Annual Report Ministry of Rural Development (April 2008 – March 2009) reported that in case enhancing wage earning and impact on minimum wage narrated that 67% of the funds were utilized in the form of wage pay to the labourer.
    - This study reported that in case of increase of outreach to the poor and marginalized state of the society, it came out that programme had high work participation for marginalized groups like SC/ST (54%) and women 48%. Further it was reported that 27.75 lakh works has been undertaken to strengthen the natural wage, of which 46% were soil conservation 18% rural connectivity, 50% land development, 20% irrigation work on individual beneficiaries.

- This study reported that 54.72% was share of SC/ST households in getting employment under MGNREGA.

- Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR) (2007) in an evaluation study on MGNREGA (A survey of 20 districts) regarding getting employment under the scheme other than MGNREGA reported that 86% of the household expressed that they were not benefited with any other scheme. The available secondary data source at district level shows that the share of BPL households who obtained job cards varies from 26 to 81% among the served 20 districts.
    - This study on MGNREGA further reported that showing responses of the households regarding method of obtaining job cards indicate that one-fourth of the households got their job cards through gram sabha. Nearly half of the households had applied for job cards through a plain paper. Further they expressed that one-fifth of the beneficiaries got their job cards through door to door survey conducted by the gram sabha, whereas only 7% of the served people got the job cards by oral request.
    - This evaluation study on MGNREGA reported that opinion of respondents regarding approval of all applicants prior to registration by gram sabha, narrated that all the eligible households who were registered for issue of jab cards have to be approved by convening of gram sabha meeting and by reading the name of those families in the open meeting of gram sabha.
    - This evaluation study on MGNREGA regarding verification of the eligible registrants in an open meeting reported that, three-fourth of the respondents agreed that proper verification of all the applicants was done before issuing the cards.
    - This evaluation study on MGNREGA indicated that most of the migrant families were not registered for job cards. Only 3% agreed that migrant families have also registered for job card under MGNREGA Act.
    - This evaluation study on MGNREGA depicted that on an average, nearly 5% of the survey households agreed that the job cards were surrendered to gram sabha officials and only during work allocation they were handed over to them for getting entries of the wages.

- This evaluation study on MGNREGA about time lag between application and issue of job cards reported that two-third of the served beneficiaries agreed that job cards were issued to them within 15 days of the applications.
- This evaluation study on MGNREGA regarding number of visits by the households purely for the purpose of obtaining job cards reported that 58% respondents obtained the job cards by visiting the gram sabha office only once. Whereas 9% respondents visited the gram panchayat office more than twice.
- This evaluation study on MGNREGA reported that there is a provision of waiting period duration after seeking for employment through application within 15 days time. It further reported that only 71.5% of the job seekers were provided employment with in the stipulated time period of 15 days, whereas 7% of the respondents were provided employment after 3 weeks.
- This evaluation study on MGNREGA about the provision of providing 100 days employment to each households, it was found that only 4.5% of job card holders did utilize more than 35 days or wage per family. Most of the beneficiaries did not utilize up to 100 days since the scheme was in initial stage.
- This evaluation study on MGNREGA about several modes of dissemination of information dealing with work allocation so as to inform all the household, it was found that 55% of the households came to know about the works and scheme through public announcement, either in gram panchayat or gram sabha followed by 29% respondent and 16% through drum meeting which is the age old, traditional way of disseminating the information from the gram panchayat office.
- This evaluation study on MGNREGA regarding provision of allocating one-third wage to the women beneficiaries, it was found that in 21.5% households, women folk of family did not take part to the extent of 33% of person days. Only in 42% households the women could share the one-third of the allotted person days (Wage days).
- This evaluation study on MGNREGA about the provision of providing the basic facility crèche, first aid drinking water, shade, for the workers of the work site, reported that only 80% of the households did not find drinking

water facility at the work site, only one-fourth of them agree that there is a creche facility, only 65% of households did agree that there is a facility of shade near the work site.

- This evaluation study on MGNREGA about recording of the attendance at the work site reported that 53% of the participant could not put their signature on the record and recorded their attendance by thumb impression, in the eastern region due to being illiterate.

- Jaswal and Paulomee's (2007) study summary reported on "will MGNREGA ensure security against hunger" in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra concluded that 42% of the cases creation of new ponds and depending or cleaning of existing once was undertaken 26% of cases, work related to road construction and maintenance was provided, check-dam related work formed16% of the case, rest of the cases comprised of work like canal maintenance and mud–work (digging and carrying) hence it is clear that the emphasis is on creation of assets which form a part of the basic infrastructure for the community.

- Ghuman, & Singh (2008) in a study on MGNREGA in rural development in Panjab reported that 91.3% workers were in the age group of 18-50 years and 1.2% was more than 65 years in the entire district. The remaining 7.5% workers were in the age group of 51-65 years.

- Pankaj K. Ashok (2008) in his study on process, institution and mechanism of implementation MGNREGA: impact assessment of Bihar and Jharkhand reported that works of water conservation and harvesting, irrigation and rural connectivity constitute the bulk of schemes undertaken in Jharkhand and Bihar states. Both the state has very low irrigated areas low density of road and particularly in Jharkhand, Plenty of land available for development. The nature of works undertaken in various district of these two states suggest that the MGNREGA can contribute significantly to the creation of much needed infrastructure.
    - This report concluded that majority of the beneficiaries were happy with the MGNREGA and found it to have helped in improving their economic

condition but more than that an overwhelming number of the beneficiaries demanded that it coverage dimensions should be increased.

- This study further reported that in Jharkhand a total of 1,679,868 households which constituted 100% of household that demanded employment 66% of the BPL household were provided employment in 2007-2008, in terms of person, 901.762 individual including 272.036 women were also provided employment women constituted 30.2% of the beneficiaries that is marginally less than one third a requirement of that.

- Mathur (2008) "Employment guarantee progress so far" depicted in the finding that MGNREGA could act as a great agent of socio-economic up-liftment and providing livelihood security of poorest of the poor in India if implemented earnestly. The employment and the earning under MGNREGA should be treated as additional avenue for such households.

Importance of MGNREGA

MGNREGA is a very important programme implemented throughout the country. Day by day a number of new activities are added under this act. As such no study has yet been conducted to assess different activities under MGNREGA in Pali district so this is the right time to conduct a study on different initiative of rural development (Socio-economic upliftment of beneficiaries) under MGNREGA.

Objectives of the Study:

- To study the socio economic profile of the beneficiaries before and after MGNREGA.
- To study the impact of MGNREGA on day to day living of the rural people.
- To record the impact of road connectivity as a result of MGNREGA.
- To measure the economic empowerment of rural people through MGNREGA.
- To study the nature and magnitude of the grievance regarding implementation of MGNREGA.

Methodology:

This chapter deals with the research design, tools and techniques of scientific investigation employed in light of the objectives of the study. It describes and clarifies the entire method and procedure followed in the selection of location, sample and statistical methods used to drive at results and conclusions.

The chapter has been presented under following sub heads:-

1) Location of the study
2) Universe of the study
3) Sampling design
4) Selection of respondents
5) Delimitation of the study
6) Selection of tools
7) Collection of data
8) Analysis of the data

1) Location of the study

A) Selection of the district: Pali district of Rajasthan will be purposively selected for the above investigation, on the basis of following criteria

- MGNREGA programme is very well implemented in the district.
- The researcher belongs to the same district, thus will help for in depth interaction in collecting the data.
- The researcher has good rapport with the field functionaries.

B) Selection of the block: The present study will be conducted in Sojat city panchayat samiti of Pali district, which will be purposively selected.

C) Selection of panchayat: There are 38 panchayats in this block, out of which 15 panchayats will be purposively selected for the above investigation on the basis of maximum activities undertaken under MGNREGA

2) Universe of the study

A mix of both males and females of different ages and qualification will be selected for getting the primary data.

3) Sampling Design

For the proposed study random sampling will be resorted to, for males and females of different ages and qualification.

4) Selection of Respondents

A comprehensive list of the beneficiaries in each panchayat will be received from the secretary panchayat and out of the list, 20 beneficiaries will be randomly selected for the present investigation, thus the total sample size will be 15 X 20 = 300 respondents.

5) Delimitation of the Study

- Study will be delimited to beneficiaries and functionaries of MGNREGA Act.
- Study will be delimited to Sojat city block of Pali district.

6) Selection of Tools

Construction of research tool to achieve objectives of the research is an important step in any research. Keeping in mind the subject matter and the objective of the study, an interview schedule will be developed after going through relevant literature, conferring with the personals of the MGNREGA and other important members.

The structured interview schedule will finally consist of 5 major sections.

1) This section will deal with general information of the respondents related to their socio-economic status.

2) This section will be developed to study the impact of MGNREGA in day to day living of the respondents, after thorough discussion with the subject matter specialists and experts of MGNREGA, items will be selected to measure the impact.

3) This section will be designed to find out the impact of road-connectivity on the MGNREGA beneficiaries. A number of questions / items will be prepared to study the impact.

4) This section will be developed to measure the economic empowerment through MGNREGA. Suitable questions will be developed to measure the economic impact of the beneficiaries.

5) This section of the schedule will be used to measure constraints and grievances faced by the MGNREGA implementing the agency. The question will be framed in such a way that will measure the nature and the magnitude of the grievances.

7) Collection of data

For data collection interview schedule will be used by the researcher. The researcher will personally conduct interview with the respondents to collect the data.

8) Analysis of the data

The data so collected will be suitably coded, tabulated, analysed and interpreted to draw the conclusions.

References:

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